



Interpreting the 2012 Kindergarten Screen Pilot Results

What were the results of the fall 2012 Kindergarten Common Screener pilot administration?

28% of entering kindergarteners performed within the Ready or Ready with Enrichments range. 72% fell below this range and were designated Ready with Supports.

A higher rate of entering kindergarteners demonstrated “average” performance across key school readiness domains. This reflects a broad definition of average, such that Kentucky students fell within the average range compared to national peers (peers who participated in the national research study supporting the tool). For participating districts, the following proportion of students fell within the average/above average range across three domains

- 40% for Language/Communication
- 50% for Physical Wellbeing
- 59% for Cognitive/General Knowledge skills

What does it mean that only 28% of students were “ready” for kindergarten?

A central goal of the common kindergarten screener, as outlined in 704 KAR 5:070, was to provide teachers with key information (early in the school year) that they can use to guide instruction and meet the individual needs of all students. Setting a conservative criterion for “ready” ensures that all children who can benefit from additional focus in their instructional plans will be identified early.

When interpreting the results, consider that 72% of entering kindergarteners exhibited overall performance that warrants *further focus* to ensure these children receive the support they need to succeed in school (i.e., Ready with Supports). Essentially, this means a high proportion of children could benefit from additional instructional focus, and the common kindergarten screener will ensure more children get the focused instruction they need early in their school careers.

In future years, Kentucky will have the opportunity to refine the criterion for readiness to ensure it is supporting the state’s specific goals. As with any new test, the pilot year is used to inform future administrations, and “calibration” – the setting of the criterion/standard for readiness – will be an important consideration in future years.

Why are the domain scores higher than the total “readiness” score?

While the domain scores and the total readiness level are related, they were developed for different purposes. The domain scores represent normed scores and the total score is instead criterion-referenced – essentially it’s the difference between a test graded on a curve (normed) and one that is not (criterion-referenced). The definition of average for the domain scores is somewhat broad, while the cutoff for “ready” is defined conservatively to ensure that all children with potential issues are identified, so that teachers will focus attention on instructional planning to address the specific needs of these students.

In understanding the difference between these two scores, let’s consider an example case: One student (we can call him Johnny) scored within the average range on all three domains; however, his total score resulted in a Ready with Supports designation. When the teacher examines Johnny’s results, summary data reveals that he is somewhat below average (although within the average range) in cognitive/general knowledge skills. Further examination of these results shows a deficiency in early math skills (particularly rote counting); the teacher can now focus particular attention on Johnny’s math instruction. Just as a doctor would want to further investigate an ostensibly minor issue (e.g., iron deficiency) in a generally healthy patient, in case it were to emerge as a significant issue; so too was the readiness bar set conservatively to ensure no potential issues were missed that could be addressed early in a child’s school career.

What results can we expect next year?

In 2013-14, the first year of full statewide implementation of the kindergarten screener, Kentucky will implement an updated screening tool that will ensure better alignment of scores to the Common Core standards. We do not know what the results will be next year, but we’d hope that the greater focus brought to key readiness skills as a result of the pilot results and the state’s overall commitment to this initiative will drive increased rates of readiness. In addition, as noted above, Kentucky will have the opportunity in future years to “recalibrate” the criterion/standard for readiness, based on data gathered in the initial years of this initiative, to ensure that the information gathered at the state and district levels will be as useful as possible in guiding instruction and ultimately ensuring student success.